

What is Performance Based Interviewing?

Performance Based Interviewing (PBI) is a selection process that uses interviewing techniques to ask job applicants questions about the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and experience (KSAAEs) they have that are important in order for them to do a good job. Studies show that the way people behave in the past is probably the way they will behave in the future. PBI questions ask job applicants to tell about what they did (their behavior) in the past. When deciding who is the best applicant, the interviewer will look at the degree to which each applicant possesses the important knowledge, skills, abilities, attitude, and experience necessary for successful performance in the job.

In Performance Based Interviewing (PBI), the interviewer must do the following:

- Review the important duties of the job to be filled.
- Determine the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and experience (KSAAEs) required in order for someone to successfully perform the duties.
- Plan, in advance, a list of questions to ask all applicants.
- Make sure the questions relate to the important KSAAEs.
- Make applicants feel welcome and comfortable during interviews.
- Make sure questions ask applicants to tell about their specific past work or life experiences that relate to the important KSAAEs.
- Conduct fair, legal, and unbiased interviews.
- Make sure applicants understand any special requirements of the job, such as different tours of duty or rotating tours of duty, travel requirements, overtime work, etc.

How Are Performance Based Interviews Different from Traditional Interviews?

Traditional interview questions usually ask applicants to describe what they would do in a specific situation. PBI questions ask applicants to describe what they have done in a specific situation. Traditional interview questions often only require a “yes” or “no” answer. PBI questions require applicants to describe or tell about their experiences. In traditional interviews, the interviewer does most of the talking. In PBI interviews, the applicant does most of the talking. In PBI interviews, the interviewer takes notes. When all the interviews are finished, the interviewer refers to the notes to refresh his or her memory. The following shows the differences between traditional and PBI interview questions:

Traditional Interview Question:

How would you handle an upset customer?

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On a scale of 1-10, how high of a score would you give yourself for customer service?

PBI Question:

Please tell me about a time when you had to deal with an upset customer. What was the problem? What did you do? What was the outcome?

Traditional Interview Question:

Are you good at solving problems?

PBI Question:

Please tell me about a time when you had to do some research in order to solve a problem.

Traditional Interview Question:

Do you know Microsoft Word?

PBI Question:

Tell me how you have used Microsoft Word at work.

How Do I Prepare for a Performance Based Interview?

- Read the vacancy announcement. Be sure you understand the major duties described.
- The vacancy announcement will list the important knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for the job. Think about your work or volunteer experience where you demonstrated these important KSAs. Think about any education or training where you gained the knowledge or skills required.
- Write down your experience, education and training that relate to the KSAs on the vacancy announcement. Be clear about what you have done and accomplished.
- Contact your Library Service staff to check out the videotape, “More Than A Gut Feeling II.” Watch the 30 minute videotape. It provides a good background on PBI. It also shows applicants in PBI job interviews.
- Contact your Library Service staff to check out the videotape, “Get Hired! How to Ace the Interview.” This 28 minute video is an excellent tool for anyone preparing for a job interview.
- Ask friends to help you practice interviewing. Your friends can role-play the interviewers and ask you PBI questions. This interview practice will help you feel more confident and comfortable when you have a “real” interview.
- Think about knowledge, skills, and abilities you can bring to the new job if you are selected. Practice marketing your current and past accomplishments that relate to the job for which you are applying. Think about how your KSAAEs would benefit the service and the customers (including veterans) the VA serves.

Where Can I Learn More About Performance Based Interviewing?

In addition to watching the videotapes, “More Than A Gut Feeling II” and “Get Hired! How to Ace the Interview,” you can find a great deal of information on the internet. If you don’t know how to access the internet, ask a friend to help you. You can also go to your local library and ask for help on how to use the internet. While we use the term “performance based interviewing” in the VA, you will want to use the term “behavioral interview” when searching the internet. There are many sites with very useful information. The following are just a few you may want to look at:

- www.eng.iastate.edu/ecs/students/Interviewing/interviewing/tsld007.htm
- www.departments.bucknell.edu/career_dev/resumes_coverlett/interviewing_how_to.html
- www.wcupa.edu/_information/afa/humanresources/empbbquestions.htm
- www.va.gov/pbi

High Performance Development Model – Expected Outcomes

As the High Performance Development Model is implemented at all levels within VHA, we will evolve into an organization that learns continuously, is aligned with the competencies needed for today and tomorrow, and offers opportunities for growth and career development to all employees. Immediate results will include improved employee satisfaction, and more efficient, effective operations.



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Performance Based Interviewing:

An Introduction for Employees

